

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

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Apple Pay Arrives Late to e-Battle

With Alipay and WeChat commanding the market, Apple faces a long fight. **Page 4**



Campus HIV Infections on the Rise

A lack of sex ed has put HIV on the rise among China's gay college students. **Page 5**



Romanian Director Tells China Stories

Ema Stoian came to China to chase her dreams of studying film. **Page 6**



Monkey Baby Boom

A combination of superstition and relaxed birthing restrictions are making 2016 a boom year for pregnancy.

Beijing alone is expecting some 300,000 new births this year – a 20 percent jump – as local couples try for a lucky monkey or a second child. **Page 2**

WeChat to Implement Withdrawal Fees in March

BY DIAO DIAO

WeChat announced on February 15 that it will charge users for withdrawing money. Amounts that exceed 1,000 yuan cumulatively will be charged a 0.1 percent processing fee, as in a bank.

Transfers between accounts will remain free. The new policy takes effect on March 1.

WeChat said that every withdrawal will be charged at least 0.1 yuan, which is not intended to generate profits but to pay its own banking bills, according to Tencent, the company that owns WeChat.

In an editorial, *Beijing Youth Daily* said the move is a sign that Tencent

intends to promote its WeChat Wealth service. From March 1, users who buy their financial product using a WeChat balance will be exempt from the processing fee. Those who buy the products using a bank card tied to WeChat Wealth will not be charged either.

WeChat also said its most popular service – digital red envelopes sent during the Spring Festival – will not face an additional fee.

WeChat started charging transfer fees last October. Its Transfer and Go Dutch services carry processing fees on amounts that exceed 20,000 yuan per person per month.

Luo Chao, a digital payment insider, said Alipay is still paying the bill for its users. During this year's red envelope battle between WeChat and Alipay, WeChat won, but Luo said that WeChat's policy switch may cost it a few new users. ■



CHINESE STOCK INDEXES

SSE (Shanghai)

Close	Change	YTD
2,741.25	▼ 187.65 (6.41%)	-22.53%

SZSE (Shenzhen)

Close	Change	YTD
9,551.08	▼ 756.55 (7.34%)	-24.59%

HSI (Hong Kong)

Close	Change	YTD
18,888.75	▼ 303.70 (1.58%)	-13.81%

Accurate to market close on February 25, 2016

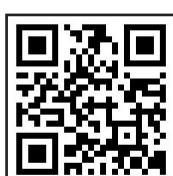


Beijing Youth Daily Group President: Zhang Yanping
Editor-in-Chief: Yu Haibo ■ Director: Li Xiaobing
Address: Building A, 23 Baijiazhuan Dong Li,
Chaoyang District, Beijing, China 100026



Editor-in-Chief: Jack Wang ■ Content Director: Su Derui ■ Designer: Zhao Yan ■ Phone: (010) 6590 2515 ■ FAX: (010) 6590 2525
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Beijing Braces for 300,000 'Monkey Babies'

BY YANG XIN

Chinese tradition holds that those born in the year of the monkey are crafty, smart and charming. The popular superstition has encouraged many couples to delay parenthood and catch up with the change in the Chinese zodiac from the less desirable sheep to the "lucky" monkey.

Beijing alone is expecting as many as 300,000 births this year, a 20 percent jump from last year's 250,000, said Gao Xiaojun, a member of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Health and Family Planning on February 18.

Not only is the monkey year an auspicious time to give birth, it's also the first opportunity for many families to have

more than one child, with China terminating its one-child policy last year.

By the end of 2015, the number of female residents in Beijing who were of child-bearing age reached 2.36 million, and approximately 62,000 parents are already pregnant with a second child. Some 20,000 couples have already given birth since the capital relaxed its one-child policy on February 21, 2014.

Gao said most of the obstetrics departments in Beijing are fully booked until April, a 30 percent increase from 2015. Gao said the departments are under a severe burden and Beijing will implement a strict filing and delivery system to better serve expecting mothers. Gao said large

hospitals will give priority to high-risk pregnancy groups.

Some experts are more concerned about the further burden the baby boom will place on Beijing's already strained medical system, which is short some 200,000 pediatricians, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

Poor pay, long hours and abysmal career prospects prompted approximately 50 percent of pediatricians to quit between 2005 and 2011, according to the commission. This leaves one pediatrician, on average, to serve 2,300 children. Such amount of doctors in many developed countries are only required to serve half the amount of patients. ■

Court Rules in Kindergarten's Favor in Abuse Case

BY YANG XIN

Reports of child abuse across China are on the rise. But for a family in Chaoyang district who recently lost their lawsuit against an allegedly abusive teacher, justice remains elusive. Last October, a man surnamed Zhang published an article titled, "Sweet Angel Kindergarten Treated My Son with Cold Violence!" His allegations were turned upside down when the kindergarten sued Zhang for damaging its reputation.

On February 13, Chaoyang District Court found that although the teacher was guilty of misconduct, Zhang had damaged the kindergarten's reputation. The court ordered him to delete his article and issue a public apology.

The article in question said the school's teacher poked at his son's head with her fingertips while criticizing him

and forced him to walk barefoot in circles on the cold ground.

Zhang said that even though there were no visible injuries on his son's body, he did take his son to a psychologist who diagnosed the boy with mild depression. Zhang refused to supply the court with written documentation of his claims, claiming a need to protect his son's privacy.

The verdict was mainly based on Mr. Zhang's 'slanderous' statement to the kindergarten. "Zhang used many slanderous words such as 'violence' and 'abuse' in his post to describe the teacher's behavior, but there is no evidence proving that," the judge said.

The kindergarten accepted Zhang's argument and said the teacher's act was not deliberate. It pledged to deal with the

problem internally.

Beijing Times said Sweet Angel Kindergarten is a private kindergarten and considered among the best of such schools in Beijing.

"Former cases of teacher abuse usually ended with severe punishment for the teacher or the kindergarten. While parents may feel they are not being properly served, it's possible for victims of minor infringements to become the injuring party through an inappropriate response," *Dazhong Daily* wrote in its commentary.

"In a debt dispute, for example, if the debtor keeps making public allegations that the creditor is a 'swindler,' he or she is setting himself up as a slanderer. If the parents had not published that article online, the court's ruling would have been completely different," it said. ■

Beijing Publishes New Policy to Ease Rush Hour

BY DIAO DIAO

On February 5, Beijing held the conference on the city's transportation and published a plan to ease traffic jams. According to the department of transportation, Beijing plans to leverage technological, legal and economic mechanisms to adjust its notoriously congested transportation.

Beijing Youth Daily reported that a new expressway for public transportation in northwest Beijing will be built this year. Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province will also share their transportation cards. As many as 2,000 electric cars will be available for rent at hours staggered across the day.

As well as developing and encouraging public transportation, Beijing will also control private cars. Rong Jun, spokesman for the Beijing Municipal Commission of Transportation, said that the quota of private cars will be further limited to help with traffic jams.

The Beijing Municipal Commission of Transportation said new advice on changing the working hours to avoid rush hours will be published soon. Zhou Zhengyu, director of the Commission, said that areas such as the CBD, financial street, Zhongguancun, Shangdi and other business centers will have staggered working hours to avoid traffic jams.

Zhou Zhengyu said parking fees will be raised across the city to support the new limits.

"We are already trying to reduce traffic pressure by providing a discount to subway passengers who ride at off hours. But the discount is not enough, and we are planning more incentives to deal with Beijing's traffic from all aspects," Zhou said. ■





Smelly Waterways to be Cleaned by 2018

BY YANG XIN



Photo by AFP

More Goods Excluded from National 'Return with No Reason' Policy

BY DIAO DIAO

Mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices are exempt from a national law that enables shoppers to return any purchase within seven days for no reason, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce said.

The law, enacted in 2014, has proved problematic for regulators as each product category requires evaluation for whether or not the law is applicable. Industry analysts doubt the value of the return policy law.

A revision added exemptions for tailored goods, fresh and perishable goods, downloaded or unpackaged audio prod-



ucts, computer software, newspapers and magazines to the return policy.

The State Administration for Industry and Commerce now is adding

water pollution problems.

"Nationally, among 295 cities of and above the prefectural level, 218 contained some of the country's 1,861 most foul-smelling bodies of water," said Zhang Yue, an inspector of the urban construction division in the ministry.

From the geographical perspective, more than 64 percent of the polluted waterways are scattered through China's south. In terms of provinces, more than 60 percent of the polluted waters are found in the southeast coastal provinces of Guangdong, Anhui, Shandong, Hunan, Hubei, Henan and Jiangsu, Zhang said.

Zhang said the actual situation may be worse, as many polluted waterways have yet to be reported.

The announcement marks the first time the government disclosed the nation's water pollution status to the public.

The 21st Century Business Herald reported that as many as 40 cities have announced action plans on water pollution governance.

To prevent water pollution, the ministry is encouraging the private sector to undertake water cleanup projects by way of public-private partnership.

"By bringing the private sector into play, local government can outsource water pollution prevention projects to the professional market and concentrate on supervision and monitoring instead," Zhang Yue said. ■

THE WEEK IN WEIRD

STRANGE HAPPENINGS ON THE CHINESE NEWS WIRE
BY SU DERUI

Hebei Men Detained for Orgy with Prostitutes

Sexpats be warned: Chinese police frown on people who have noisy orgies with hookers in cheap hostels during midday.

Three men and two prostitutes were arrested in Xianning, Hebei province hostel after being caught in the middle of a screaming love fest. One of the orgy participants, a 28-year-old surnamed Wang, told police he paid the women 600 yuan for their participation.

Like many genius ideas, the orgy plan was formulated during a night of heavy drinking with his friends.

Wang is being held in criminal detention while the other orgy participants face administrative detention. Police said they have not finished their investigation.

(Ifeng)

Genius Driver Paints Police Logos on Personal Car

A man in Xi'an was pulled over on February 17 for driving a black and white Mustang covered in police imagery. With the large "POLICE" mark painted on the doors rather than the standard Chinese characters, the vehicle resembled a foreign police car.

The driver defended his decorations as being "for fun." Police searched his car and found no other police related paraphernalia.

The decoration of a civilian vehicle to resemble a police car violates both city ordinances and national public security laws, police said. The owner was instructed to remove the images from his car.

(Tencent News)

Man Sends Funerary Wreath to 'Friend's' Wedding

A man in Tiantai, Zhejiang province was detained for leaving a funerary wreath on the doors of a friend's wedding reception on February 19.

The act was apparently revenge for having been fined 5,000 yuan for battering his friend, the bride, in a bar fight on January 28.

Xu has prior convictions for theft and drug use. He turned himself in to the police on February 20 and was sentenced to 13 days of administrative detention.

(Tencent News)

Folk Singer's Obvious Slip Exposes Lip-Synching at Gala

With how over-rehearsed and heavily regulated Chinese televised gala performances are, the use of lip-synching should surprise no one.

But viewers still expect performers to give them the illusion of a real performance.

Neo folk singer Sa Dingding made one of the biggest gaffes in gala history when she began her Monday night performance by singing into an upside down microphone. Although she quickly reversed the mic in an awkward gesture, the illusion was shattered.

(Tencent News)

Apple Pay Aims to Dethrone Alipay

BY KARENA HU

Apple Pay became available to Chinese Apple users on February 28. Within 12 hours of its release, approximately 380 million credit cards were added to Wallet, Apple's payment app, accounting for a third of Apple Pay supported devices in China.

Samsung, a strong opponent in smart phone business, expedited its plans to roll out Samsung Pay in China. Xiaomi, China's domestic smartphone giant, announced plans to add a similar payment function to its Mi 5 phone.

However, Apple Pay still faces a major hurdle to widespread use in China: a payment world dominated by Alibaba's Alipay, the most widely used third-party payment platform.

Data from Analysis.cn shows that more than 70 percent of all digital transactions in the third quarter of 2015 were settled on Alipay. Ten Pay, the payment system used in WeChat, ranked second with 16 percent.

"Apple's entry will not have a big impact on China's mobile payment market. In the next year or two, its NFC payment will not replace paying via QR code," said Hao Zhujing, an analyst at Analysis.cn.

Pros and Cons

The biggest difference between Apple Pay and Alipay are the technologies used: NFC or QR codes.

In Apple Pay, phones must be brought close to a point of sale machine that supports NFC payment. After verifying the fingerprint, the payment is completed within two seconds. It can be used in areas even without an Internet connection.

"Speaking from function, NFC payment is more like an updated POS system, which is more to the taste of commercial banks," Sohu wrote in its editorial.

But there are not enough NFC enabled POS machines in China to support Apple Pay, and store assistants have had trouble instructing customers



Photos by CFP

how to use Apple Pay correctly.

"I visited seven stores in the morning, and only two really supported Apple Pay," a user wrote on Leiphone.com. "When I asked the cashier about Apple Pay at McDonald's, she seems quite confused and said they only supported Alipay and WeChat."

Chinese netizens also ran into trouble when adding a credit card to Apple Wallet. Li, a woman who wanted to add a credit card to her Apple Wallet, spent nearly four hours getting through the process. When adding her card, she received constant push notifications indicating the process failed.

The biggest drawback for Apple Pay lies in its hardware limitation. Apple Pay can be only used on the latest iPhone 6 and only with iOS 9.2, and only then with a POS machine supporting NFC payment. According to a report from Hexun.com, out of 10 million Union Pay Quick Pass payment devices in China, only 3 million can support Apple Pay.

Why China

On the surface, pushing Apple Pay in China makes sense. Data from the China Internet Network Information Center showed that China had more than 30.59 million mobile payment users in 2015. It was also one of the most dynamic markets in recent years.

Weak adoption of Apple Pay in North America is also a contributor to the company's Asian push.

First Annapolis, a consulting agency, found that only 20 percent of iPhone owners used Apple Pay more than once in a month in December 2015.

Tracking statistics from market research company Info Scout revealed similarly unsatisfying numbers. A survey of 300,000 people found that only 2.5 percent were using Apple Pay, a sharp drop from when it was first released.

In the meantime, Union Pay has been plummeting as more consumers resolve their transactions using Alipay and WeChat. Since Union Pay lacked payment app technology, working together with Apple seemed like a good alternative.

"Apple needed the inter-bank transaction system that Union Pay already runs. The company brought them access to more than 10 million Chinese credit card holders," said Dong Ximiao, a visiting research associate in Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies in Renmin University of China.

Apple Pay also worked as a counterattack from commercial banks to third-party payment platforms. Since virtual accounts are not needed for Apple Pay, commercial banks are happy to cooperate and increase their user coverage. It also meets the supervision principles of The People's Bank of China by confining online payments to small amounts.

A New Era

"Apple Pay is only a mobile payment solution. It's not really part of the Internet biosphere. If Alipay or WeChat combine their online and offline experience, Apple Pay will soon lose its strength," said Li Yinghao, the CEO from QF Pay.

The real beneficiary of Apple Pay's release remains unclear.

Apple might increase user loyalty or encourage the purchase of more iPhones to support the service. Commercial banks may also benefit by dragging back users from competing payment platforms. Not to mention the arrival of Apple Pay introduces millions of Chinese buyers to NFC payment.

Alibaba is already developing a similar identification function. In Hannover Messe 2015, Jack Ma, CEO of Alibaba group, showed German president Merkel how to purchase the Hannover stamp via its "Smile to Pay" service. The payment process uses face recognition and a smartphone camera.

Apple faces an uphill battle since it is attempting to change the payment habits of Chinese users, especially since Apple Pay, a credit card substitute, faces little advantage when compared to traditional services.

"If Apple Pay tries to win more market share in China, it will need to lower the user cost to distinguish itself from the traditional transaction procedures," said Hou Benqi, general manager of online banking at Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. ■

(Karena Hu is an intern at Beijing Today.)





Photos by Qingshaonian.com

Shadow of HIV Falls on Chinese Campuses

BY WANG YAN



“I was calm when I found out I was infected with HIV virus. Although, I never imagined it happening, I was calm and only cried once,” said Lin Hui (pseudonym), a 20-year-old student in Nanjing.

Lin was diagnosed with HIV in 2014, a few months before his 18th birthday.

“I did not plan to inform my family, but since I was under 18 the hospital insisted that I do so. My mom came and the doctors talked to her privately. We did not talk about the illness directly, but she accompanied me to several treatments,” Lin said. “Since then I have been taking medicine, and now my body is in stable condition. Most of my health tests are good.”

Like many college students, Lin was infected through unprotected homosexual intercourse.

Bigger Problem

Acknowledging AIDS and taking action to help HIV carriers has taken China a long time.

In the 1990s, around 50,000 people contracted HIV through illegal blood selling. The government was reluctant to acknowledge the problem and denied that poor Chinese farmers could possibly contract the virus. For the Chinese government, AIDS was a “disease of foreigners, spread through illicit drugs and promiscuous sex.” Almost 20 years after the outbreak, the spread of AIDS through the illegal blood market is under control.

The government, according to Benhard Schwartländer, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in China, “has been extremely pragmatic in rolling out the HIV response.” China has built “the largest methadone clinic program in the world” in a very short period of time.

The real challenge today, said Schwartländer, is especially among young gay men, who seem to be beyond the reach of existing programs.

Southern Weekly reported the number of HIV carriers among newly enrolled university students increased from 482 to 2,552 between 2008 and 2014.

In 2008, 59 percent of these infections were spread through homosexual sex. That number swelled to 81.6 percent in 2014. According to China’s National Health and Family Planning, China had 7,249 HIV carriers and AIDS patients between the ages of 15 and 24 in 2014.

“Although that is not a large number, the increasing rate is particularly bothersome,” Wu Zunyou, head of the National Center for AIDS/STD Control and Prevention, told *Southern Weekly*. “Since 2011, the number of young people contracting the virus has been increasing by 30 percent, and by 2014 that number reached nearly 60 percent,” Wu said.

In 2014, more than 50 percent of the newly diagnosed HIV carriers across China’s 31 provinces were gay. In first tier-cities as Beijing and Shanghai, that number passed 70 percent, Wu said.

That’s not to say homosexuality caused China’s new wave of HIV infections. Rather, the government’s negligence and the societal stigma imposed on the gay community has made the group a more vulnerable target for HIV in China.

Sex Education

“I did not use protection, because I thought it was pointless. Same sex inter-

course would not lead to pregnancy,” Lin said. “There is very little sex or AIDS prevention education on campus or in society in general. People only talk about AIDS in December [World AIDS Day] and then forget about it.”

Wen Yumei, a virologist, told *Southern Weekly* that education departments are paying attention to AIDS prevention on campus. “But some universities still think AIDS is a faraway problem and refuse take action. Universities also don’t have qualified teachers on this issue.”

China’s sex education lags far behind the country’s economic development. According to a survey conducted by Sohu.com, 32.2 percent of surveyed Chinese learn about sex through online articles, 24.4 percent through porn, and less than 1 percent said they received sex education from their family or at school.

Homosexual sex education is almost completely ignored by families, schools and society.

“How to educate and properly guide gays in China is a serious problem and a barrier to cross,” an official with Yunnan Health and Family Planning Commission told *Southern Weekly*. The official, who would not be named, said controlling the spread of HIV among gay men is essential to the country’s overall AIDS prevention.

China’s gay community is growing in recent years, and topics concerning homosexuality are becoming less of a taboo. However, the overall cultural and societal environment makes few gays willing to come out. Most gays and lesbians remain silent about their sexuality, and that has made it more challenging for groups to reach them and inform them about how to control risks.

“Around 20 to 30 percent of Chinese gay men end up in a heterosexual marriage and seek homosexual encounters on the side. That has also increased the spread of HIV in China,” Zhang Lingqi, an AIDS specialist, told *Southern Weekly*.

Community Work

Sexual orientation and personal sexual behaviors remain sensitive topics in many countries.

While many counties are reluctant to deal with these matter at a government level, most have a strong network of NGOs to pick up the task.

“NGOs with a professional structure don’t exist at the same level in China,” Schwartländer said. There are LGBT groups and AIDS prevention organizations in Beijing, but they have very limited resources and capability to reach a larger crowd. The WHO representative said Chinese government usually is responsible for everything, but that it needs to learn that sexuality is an area more effectively reached by community efforts.

For HIV carriers, not only must they face social pressure – they must also find a way to accept their illness. Lin said he was an optimist and decided to take a positive approach to managing his illness.

“The world is not great, but it is not horrible either. The virus is an uninvited guest. Since we cannot send it away, we might as well try to make peace with it,” Lin said. “Medicine is progressing each day, and maybe one day the virus can be killed. But I want to tell healthy people that the AIDS virus is our common enemy. Carriers or AIDS patients are not.” ■



Romanian Film Director Tells Stories in a Country that Reminds Her 'She Can't Understand'

BY SIMINA MISTREANU



Photos Courtesy of Ema Stoian

Ema Stoian has come to see snow as an omen on her journey to China.

Six years ago, as she was mailing out her application for a master's program at Beijing Film Academy, the first snow of the season fell on Bucharest, Romania's capital, where she was living.

Stoian, a Christian, asked God, "Do you trust me enough to offer me such a present?"

Stoian grew up in Bârlad, a small city in eastern Romania. She was the daughter of an Orthodox priest and a chemistry teacher. As a child, she strived to impress her parents with her academic results and got into the habit of choosing the most difficult path.

She studied directing in college, and by her sophomore year she was working as an assistant director of live shows on a national TV station and had assisted in the production of a feature-length movie.

But the global financial crisis shook the Eastern European country, and Romania's economy dipped by 7.2 percent in 2009. Stoian's colleagues were losing their jobs, and prospects were looking bleak.

"So what do you do in a recession?" Stoian says. "I decided I was going to leave the country. I wanted to give Romania enough time to get back on its feet. And while I was going to be away, I would manage to fill my gaps, read, watch the movies I hadn't watched. I knew I was done with TV, so I said, OK, I'll give myself an opportunity to make movies."

Thousands of youth fled Romania around that time, discouraged by the lack of prospects and lured by better jobs in the EU, which the country had recently joined. But Stoian didn't want to go to Europe. She already spoke Italian, French, Spanish and English, and wanted something more challenging. She sought a country with abundant opportunities and an affordable cost of living.

She remembered one of the professors in her master's program in communications had told students to start looking toward China. So despite her hesitations, she applied for a scholarship offered through a bilateral agreement between Romania and China. She was accepted to the school that was her first choice: Beijing Film Academy.

The Ugly Duckling

Stoian arrived in Beijing in the fall of 2010 and spent two years studying Chinese. She also took a part-time job at an English-language kindergarten and started setting up the China chapter of the Romanian Students Studying Abroad League, an organization that has branches across the world. Stoian has led the Chinese chapter for five years.

After she passed the language exam and was preparing for BFA's admission exam, the

school announced it wasn't going to make the film directing emphasis available to international students that year. Stoian was rattled. She contacted her embassy and asked to speak to the university president but ended up in a hopeless fight with the secretary. She sent countless letters until the school agreed to reopen the section to international students.

It was the season's first snow in December 2011 when Stoian received a phone call telling her to meet with Professor Wang Rui, who had agreed to become her coordinator. That same day, her mother called to tell her one of her Romanian mentors had died.

Stoian was the only foreigner in her class of eight students. All her work was done in Mandarin. Her colleagues and professors were caring and helpful, but they also made her feel like the ugly duckling – misplaced, and incapable of having the same experience and understanding of Chinese culture and cinema as her Chinese colleagues.

"The big duck was the professor, who was beautiful and perfect, with the other perfect ducklings lined behind him," Stoian says. "And I was the big, ugly duckling who had nothing to do with the rest. They would tell me, 'You are not like us.' 'Yes, I'm like you! I'm just like you, and I feel like you and think like you, and it's exactly like you say, and I resonate with this in the same way.' But they said no, no, and they just looked at me."

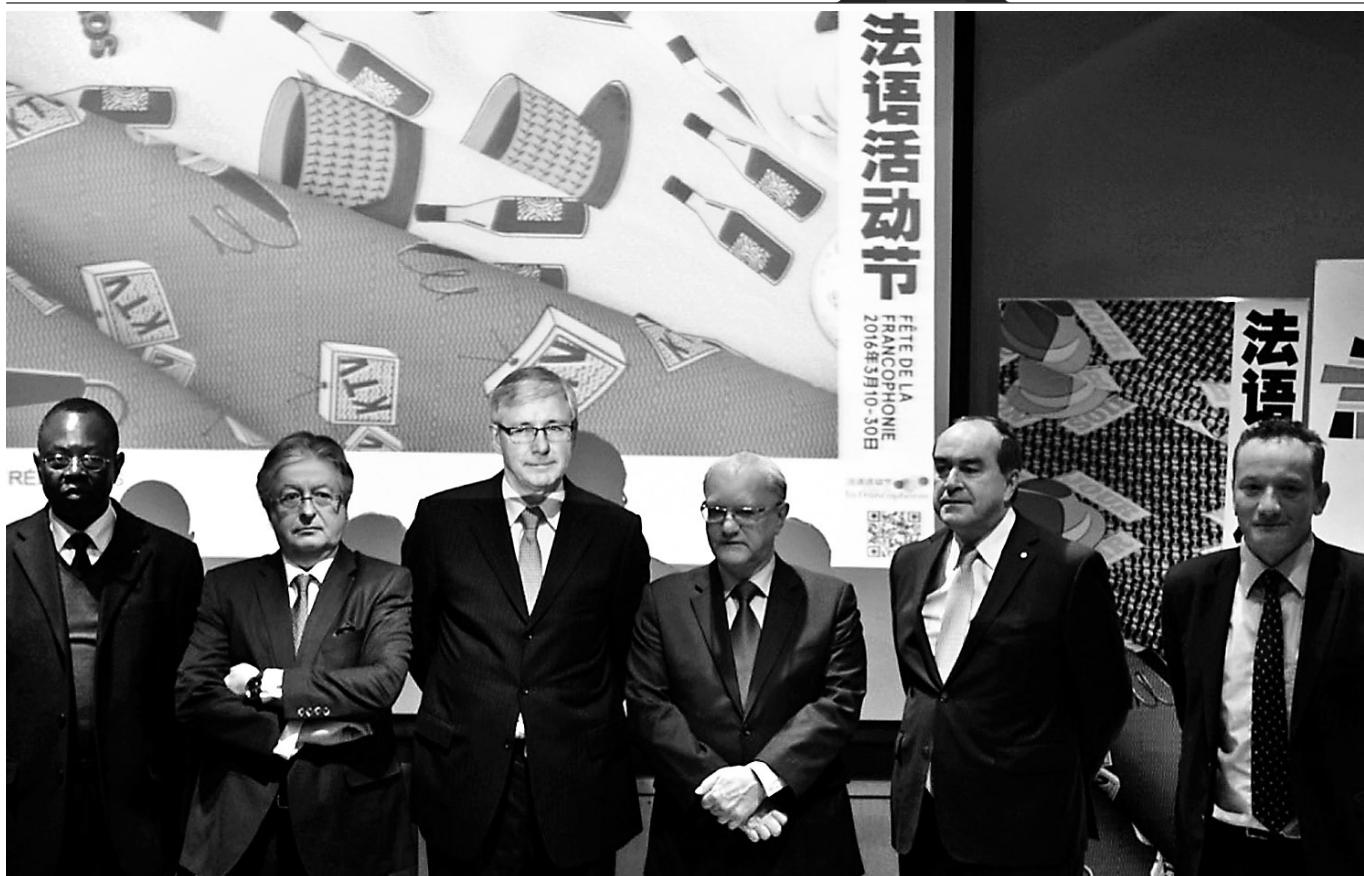
Stoian was constantly reminded she couldn't fully understand Chinese culture, and was encouraged to make movies about what she knew. She says the same kind of rigidity applies to Chinese as well: A Beijing director can only make a movie about Beijing, not a place like Xinjiang, and vice versa.

Her capstone movie was a short film called *Together* (*Zai Yiqi*), about a Romanian student in China who misses the plane that was supposed to take her home on New Year's Eve. The movie was among a select few to receive financing from the school and was shortlisted at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Stoian says it's taken her two years to discover China's essence, described as beauty, philosophy and love for quality and tradition. She has decided to pursue her Ph. D in Beijing as well, where she'll study the portrayal of Westerners in Chinese movies.

She often misses Romania, but her adjustment periods to China are now quicker and more comfortable. She feels welcome here, like the time when a 3-year-old boy at the kindergarten where she teaches, came to her after an absence.

"Where have you been?" he asked her. "I've missed you." The boy's name was Snow. ■



Mars en Folie Brings Francophone Music to 14 Chinese Cities

BY SIMINA MISTREANU

The Alliances Françaises network, along with the embassies of Canada, Switzerland and Belgium and the Quebec office in China, are announcing the 9th Mars en Folie Music Festival.

This year's March Madness event includes 30 concerts in 14 Chinese cities from March 10 to 25. Francophone artists will play various genres including indie pop, pop, jazz and rap.

The festival features four artists and bands hailing from the Wallonia-Brussels region in Belgium, Canada's Quebec province, France and Switzerland.

Nicolas Michaux is an indie pop artist based in Brussels. His songs are inspired by his travels around the world, from Denmark all the way to Congo, by the cities and landscapes he's seen and the people he's met. His songs talk about love, happiness and light, but also about the destruc-

tive forces in the world. On his tour to China, Michaux will be accompanied by guitarist Clement Nourry.

Felix Dyotte, from Quebec, will also perform during the festival. Dyotte was behind the success of several bands in the 2000s, including The Undercovers, The Stills and Chinatown, and has collaborated with famous Canadian musicians such as Pierre Lapointe and Jean Leloup.

Now Dyotte is presenting his first album in a style he describes as "elegant pop." The 13 songs on his album portray the ups and downs of intricate love stories.

The French band Babel will also perform at the festival. The quartet band was established in 2010 and boasts a free-spirit style. Their music, played on guitar, cello, keyboard and turntable, finds itself at the intersection of jazz and hip-hop.

Fabian Tharin is a Swiss who plays

ballroom punk chanson music. Tharin, who loves to experiment with his music, is considered one of the most original and surprising artists in Switzerland. For his fourth album, he has convinced several artists to lend their voices to the songs and perfect the hip-hop rhythms.

The artists will perform in 14 cities across China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Hangzhou.

The Beijing performance will take place at 7 pm on March 18 in Yugong Yishan. Free tickets will be available at the venue starting at 5 pm on the day of the concert or at Alliances Françaises offices starting on March 5. ■

Yugong Yishan

3-2 Zhang Zizhong Lu, Dongcheng
(010)6404 2711



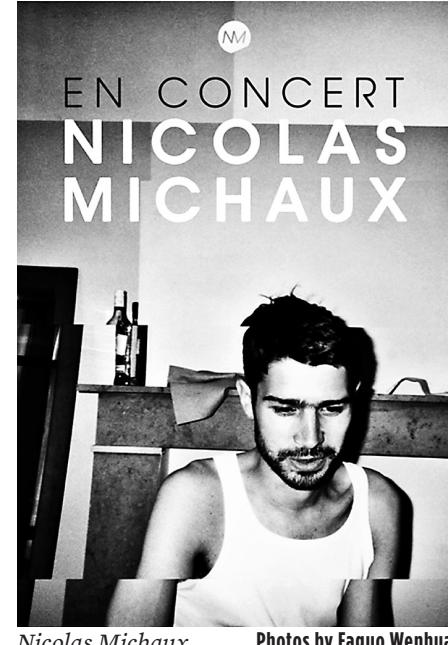
Felix Dyotte



Fabian Tharin



Babel



Nicolas Michaux

Photos by Faguo Wenhua

Germany Adds 10 Visa Application Centers in China

BY YANG XIN



Photo by the Germany Embassy in China

Germany will open 10 more visa application centers in China starting from this month, the German Embassy in China announced.

Michael Clauss, German Ambassador to China, said a new Germany visa application center will open in Wuhan, Hubei province on March 1.

More centers in Chongqing and Jinan are scheduled to open at the beginning of March, with Hangzhou, Shenzhen and Changsha to follow. The last visa centers will be opening in Kunming in April, Xi'an in May and

Nanjing and Fuzhou in June.

The German Embassy said it expects the additional visa application centers to boost applications for tourist visas to Germany.

China is now the main supplier of holiday travelers to Germany. The embassy said China issues about 400,000 visas to Chinese tourists in 2015, up 16 percent from 2014.

Germany has become a popular destination for Chinese seeking business trips, exhibition tours, health-care services, cultural events and

vacations. Many Chinese cities have opened direct flights to Germany.

Germany also provides one of the most simplified visa application services in China. Ordinary travelers can get a visa to Germany in three workdays. Business travelers are guaranteed to get a visa within 48 hours of application. For frequent travelers and businesspeople, the embassy opened the channel to apply for long-term, multiple-entry Schengen visas at no additional fees last June. ■

Visit Seoul in March



Photos By Beijing Yongli Travel Agency



March is coming! With the warmer temperatures, there is no better time to go traveling. If you are worried about holiday length, a short trip to a nearby Asian country might be your easiest solution.

Blending traditional Korean culture with modern elements, Seoul is one of the most popular travel destinations for tourists. Join a five-day trip in Seoul and embrace the beauty from one of the most dynamic cities in Asia.

Set out from Beijing by bus to Tianjin, then fly to the sixth busiest airport in Asia, Incheon International Airport. Your first stop in Seoul will be the well-preserved ancient Korean complex, Gyeongbokgung Palace. The changing of the guard at the front gate can still be seen if you're lucky.

Then take quick glance at Cheonggyecheon, a 8.4-kilometer creek flowing across the Seoul's downtown. The journey includes plenty of tasty South Korean foods, such as the well-known

ginseng chicken.

Follow along to Seoul's fun side in day two with a three-hour visit to Woongjin Playdoci, an indoor sea park with spa and ski resort. Pull on your swimsuit and enjoy. Next, visit South Korean Folk Culture Village, a theme park bringing you to ancient Korea. In the village, you may come across an authentic Korean wedding in a hanok, the traditional Korean homes.

Want to bring souvenirs for your family? Tour almost every popular shopping site in the city during the next few days. The tour includes the most famous duty-free Lotte, Shilla Duty-Free and a trip to the one-stop shopping site Myeong-dong. If you are tired of purchasing goods, the trip also covers Lotte World, the world's largest indoor amusement park, and Namsan Park.

The Seoul city trip is also available in April, May, October, November and December. Make your reservation early and start your adventure in Seoul! ■

(By Karena Hu)

北京永利国际旅行社有限公司

Beijing Yongli International Travel Agency Co., Ltd.

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